

## Message Text

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ACTION EUR-25

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 CIAE-00 DODE-00 PM-07 H-03 INR-11 L-03

NSAE-00 NSC-07 PA-04 RSC-01 PRS-01 SP-03 SS-20

USIA-15 DRC-01 /102 W

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R 231418Z SEP 74

FM AMEMBASSY LONDON

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 4125

AMEMBASSY BONN

AMEMBASSY BRUSSELS

AMEMBASSY COPENHAGEN

AMEMBASSY DUBLIN

AMEMBASSY THE HAGUE

AMEMBASSY LUXEMBOURG

AMEMBASSY PARIS

AMEMBASSY ROME

USMISSION EC BRUSSELS

USMISSION NATO BRUSSELS

USMISSION OECD PARIS

AMCONSUL BELFAST

AMCONSUL EDINBURGH

AMCONSUL LIVERPOOL

C O N F I D E N T I O N SECTION 1 OF 2 LONDON 12324

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PINT, PGOV, UK

SUBJECT: GENERAL ELECTION: THE VIEW FROM SCOTLAND

REF: A. LONDON 12029, B. LONDON 12265

SUMMARY: OUTCOME OF OCTOBER GENERAL ELECTION MAY WELL

HINGE ON RESULTS IN SCOTLAND WHERE SCOTTISH

NATIONALIST PARTY (SNP) HAS POTENTIAL TO PREVENT EITHER

PARTY FROM GAINING MAJORITY IN NEXT PARLIAMENT. SNP,

WHICH TAPS TRADITIONAL SCOTTISH NATIONAL FEELING AND

RESENTMENT TOWARD ENGLISH TO ADVANCE ITS PROGRAM CALLING

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FOR INDEPENDENT SCOTLAND, MAY ALSO CONSTITUTE LONGER

TERM THREAT TO UK POLITICAL UNITY AND US INTERESTS IN

UK. RECENT TRIP TO SCOTLAND BY EMBOFF REVEALED NEAR CONSENSUS AMONG POLITICAL LEADERS THAN SNP STANDS GOOD CHANCE TO DOUBLE AT LEAST ITS REPRESENTATION IN PARLIAMENT (FROM 7 TO 14 SEATS) AT EXPENSE OF BOTH LABOR AND CONSERVATIVE PARTIES. SNP IS CONFIDENT IT WILL REALIZE SUBSTANTIAL GAINS IN OCTOBER ELECTION AND THAT INDEPENDENCE MOVEMENT WILL EVENTUALLY PREVAIL. LEADERS OF OTHER PARTIES IN SCOTLAND APPEAR TO REALIZE POTENTIAL SNP DANGER, THOUGH THERE ARE SOME INDICATIONS OF COMPLACENCY ON PART OF SCOTTISH LABOR PARTY LEADERSHIP. DEVOLUTION PROPOSALS OF BOTH MAJOR PARTIES DO NOT APPEAR SUFFICIENT TO REVERSE TREND FAVORING SNP, AT LEAST AS FAR AS OCTOBER ELECTION IS CONCERNED, AND POPULAR DISSATISFACTION WITH MAJOR PARTIES COULD RESULT IN EVEN GREATER SNP GAINS. END SUMMARY.

1. BACKGROUND - SNP WON SEVEN SEATS IN FEBRUARY 1974 ELECTION, RETURNING ONE INCUMBENT AND TAKING FOUR AND TWO SEATS, RESPECTIVELY, FROM CONSERVATIVE AND LABOR PARTIES. SNP SHARE OF SCOTTISH VOTE DOUBLED, REACHING 22 PERCENT, AND THREATENED LABOR'S TRADITIONAL HOLD ON SCOTTISH ELECTORATE (LABOR WON 40 OF SCOTLAND'S 71 SEATS AT LAST GENERAL ELECTION). GIVEN INCONCLUSIVE OVERALL RESULTS OF LAST ELECTION (LABOR 17 SEATS SHORT OF MAJORITY AND CONSERVATIVES 21 SEATS SHORT -- SEE REF-TEL A), RECENT TREND FAVORING SNP, AND SIGNS OF GROWING POPULAR DISSATISFACTION WITH CONSERVATIVES AND LABOR, OUTCOME OF OCTOBER 10 ELECTION MAY WELL BE DECIDED IN SCOTLAND. ACCORDINGLY, EMBOFF SPENT WEEK OF SEPTEMBER 15-21 IN SCOTLAND OBSERVING SITUATION AND DISCUSSING OUTLOOK WITH VARIOUS POLITICAL OBSERVERS. IN COURSE OF TRIP, EMBOFF VISITED GLASGOW, EDINBURGH AND MARGINAL CONSTITUENCY OF WEST LOTHIAN CURRENTLY HELD BY LABOR. SUBSTANCE OF THIS CABLE WAS COORDINATED WITH CONGEN EDINBURGH.

2. SCOTTISH NATIONALIST PARTY- SNP TRACES ORIGINS TO SCOTTISH NATIONAL MOVEMENT, WHICH ENTERED POLITICAL ECLIPSE, BEFORE WWII, AND ADVOCATES COMPLETE INDEPENDENCE  
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FOR SCOTLAND. PARTY APPEALS TO STRONG FEELINGS OF SCOTTISH NATIONAL IDENTITY AND PANDERS TO SCOTTISH RESENTMENT OF ENGLISH INSENSITIVITY TO THEIR NATIONAL ASPIRATIONS. MOST OBSERVERS BELIEVE NUMBER OF SCOTS DESIRING FULL INDEPENDENCE CONSTITUTES SMALL MINORITY OF SNP SUPPORTERS (THOUGH EXPECTATION OF NORTH SEA OIL REVENUES, WHICH COULD MAKE AN INDEPENDENT SCOTLAND ECONOMICALLY VIABLE, HAS INCREASED NUMBER OF VOTERS FAVORING COMPLETE INDEPENDENCE), BUT PARTY HAS ATTRACTED LARGE NUMBERS OF SCOTS WHO FAVOR GREATER SELF GOVERN-

MENT OR WHO VOTE SNP AS MEANS OF EXPRESSIGN DISSATIS-  
FACTION WITH MAJOR PARTIES. OFTEN CALLED "TARTAN  
TORIES," SNP IS STAKING OUT MODERATE LEFTIST POSITION  
(REFTEL B) IN EFFORT TO BROADEN ITS APPEAL. IN PAST  
SNP HAS DONE BETTER CRACKING TORY VOTE, BUT NOW HAS ITS  
SIGHTS SET SQUARELY ON TRADITIONAL LABOR VOTE IN GLASGOW  
AND FREEHOLD FARMING AREAS. FOR FIRST TIME SNP WILL  
FIELD CANDIDATES IN EACH OF SCOTLAND'S 71 PARLIAMENTARY  
CONSTITUENCIES. PARTY GROWTH, ELECTORAL AND FINANCIAL,  
IN PAST DECADE HAS BEEN REMARKABLE: SHARE OF TOTAL VOTE  
IN SCOTLAND INCREASED FROM 2.4 PERCENT IN 1964 TO 22  
PERCENT IN FEBRUARY 1974, AND PARTY IS NOW ABLE TO  
AFFORD RESPECTABLE FULL-TIME STAFF WHERE IN 1964 IT DID  
NOT HAVE SINGLE FULL-TIME OFFICIAL. SNP ALSO ENJOYS  
LARGE AND ENTHUSIASTIC VOLUNTEER CAMPAIGN PARTICIPATION.  
THERE IS CONSENSUS AMONG SCOTTISH POLITICAL OBSERVERS  
THAT SNP HAS MOST ENTHUSIASTIC AND ACTIVE CAMPAIGN  
ORGANIZATION, AND THAT ITS LEVEL OF POLITICAL SOPHIS-  
TICATION IS GROWING. SNP LEADERS PUBLICLY CLAIM THEY  
WILL DOUBLE NUMBER OF PARLIAMENTARY SEATS IN COMING  
GENERAL ELECTION. ESTIMATES OF OTHER POLITICAL LEADERS  
RANGED FROM 5 TO 18 SEATS. STEPHAN MAXWELL, SNP CAM-  
PAIGN DIRECTOR, PRIVATELY ASSERTED THAT PARTY WOULD GAIN  
FROM 12 TO 18 SEATS IN ELECTION, WITH FURTHER FUTURE  
GAINS UNTIL SNP CONTROLS MAJORITY OF SCOTTISH PARLIA-  
MENTARY DELEGATION. WHILE SNP CHAIRMAN REFUSED TO  
ESTIMATE MAGNITUDE OF GAINS EXPECTED IN OCTOBER, HE WAS  
CONFIDENT OF SUBSTANTIAL INCREASE IN SNP SEATS AND  
EVENTUAL TRIUMPH OF PARTY. MOST STRIKING COMMON DE-  
NOMINATOR AMONG SNP OFFICIALS IS THEIR CONFIDENCE  
BORDERING ON ARROGANCE THAT SCOTTISH INDEPENDENCE WILL  
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ULTIMATELY PREVAIL.

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ACTION EUR-25

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 CIAE-00 DODE-00 PM-07 H-03 INR-11 L-03

NSAE-00 NSC-07 PA-04 RSC-01 PRS-01 SP-03 SS-20

USIA-15 DRC-01 /102 W

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R 231418Z SEP 74

FM AMEMBASSY LONDON  
TO SECSTATE WASHDC 4126  
INFO AMEMBASSY BONN  
AMEMBASSY BRUSSELS  
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3. LABOR OUTLOOK - WITH ONE EXCEPTION, ALL LABOR PARTY AND SCOTTISH TRADE UNION (STUC) OFFICIALS EMBOFF MET BELIEVE SNP WILL PICK UP FROM 5 TO 10 SEATS IN OCTOBER ELECTION. THEY ALSO EXPRESSED CONCERN THAT LABOR PARTY APPEARS COMPLACENT IN FACE OF SNP THREAT TO THEIR HOPES FOR MAJORITY IN NEXT PARLIAMENT. JAMES MILLEN, ASSISTANT GENERAL SECRETARY STUC WHO FAVORS INCREASED DEVOLUTION, OPINED THAT RECENT DEVOLUTION WHITE PAPER WILL NOT SUFFICE TO REVERSE TREND FAVORING SNP IN SHORT RUN, BUT BELIEVES ESTABLISHMENT OF SCOTTISH ASSEMBLY WILL STEM SNP TIDE EVENTUALLY. TAM DALYELL, YOUNG LABOR MP FROM MARGINAL WEST LoTHIAN CONSTITUENCY (MARGIN 6,400 VOTES, CONFIDENTIAL

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LESS THAN HALF 1970 MARGIN, AGAINST SNP CHAIRMAN WOLFE WHO IS AGAIN STANDING) IS RENNING SCARED. OPPOSED TO DEVOLUTION BUT RELUCTANTLY SUPPORTING WHITE PAPER, DALYELL IS PEGGING HIS CAMPAIGN ALMOST EXCLUSIVELY ON DANGERS OF SNP AND SCOTTISH INDEPENDENCE. HIS GREATEST FEAR, LIKE THAT OF MANY LABOR'S SCOTTISH MPS, IS POSSIBLE COLLAPSE OF CONSERVATIVE VOTE AND EXTENT OF "PLAGUE ON BOTH YOUR HOUSES" ATTITUDE TOWARD MAJOR PARTIES, BOTH OF WHICH WOULD FAVOR SNP. ONE FACTOR IN DALYELL'S FAVOR, HOWEVER, IS ENTRY OF LIBERAL CANDIDATE WHO MAY ATTRACT PART OF "PLAGUE" VOTE. IN CONTRACT TO

THESE VIEWS, AND PERHAPS ILLUSTRATING ALLEGED LABOR PARTY COMPLACENCY, WERE THOSE OF PETER ALLISON, PARTY'S REGIONAL ORGANIZER FOR SCOTLAND AND TITULAR HEAD OF "SCOTTISH LABOR PARTY." ENJOYING EXCELLENT REPUTATION IN LONDON AS CAMPAIGN ORGANIZER, ALLISON TOLD EMBOFF HE DOES NOT EXPECT SNP TO NET MORE THAN 2 TO 4 SEATS. HE BELIEVES LABOR WILL REGAIN AT LEAST ONE OR TWO OF THE SEATS LOST TO SNP IN FEBRUARY AND SNP WILL NOT GAIN MORE THAN 3 OR 4 SEATS FROM LABOR AND TORIES. HE ACKNOWLEDGES, HOWEVER, THAT COLLAPSE OF CONSERVATIVE VOTE WOULD GREATLY ENHANCE SNP PROSPECTS.

4. CONSERVATIVES AND LIBERALS - EMBOFF DID NOT HAVE OPPORTUNITY TO DISCUSS ELECTION OUTLOOK WITH SCOTTISH CONSERVATIVE LEADERS, AND MET ONLY ONE CONSERVATIVE MP ON TRIP. STATISTICALLY, HOWEVER, AT LEAST FOUR TORY SEATS ARE HIGHLY VULNERABLE TO SNP. AND IF LABOR'S POSITION ON DEVOLUTION IS "TOO LITTLE, TOO LATE," CONSERVATIVE CASE IS EVEN WEAKER. CONVERSATIONS WITH SEVERAL TORY BUSINESS EXECUTIVES REVEALED THEIR AWARENESS POTENTIAL SNP THREAT. SCOTTISH LIBERAL PARTY CHAIRMAN ROUBERT SMITH DOES NOT BELIEVE SNP CONSTITUTES VIABLE THREAT TO LIBERAL'S THREE SEATS IN SCOTLAND (FEBRUARY ELECTION RESULTS SEEM TO CONFIRM THIS JUDGMENT), AND EXPRESSED HOPE THAT RISING SNP VOTE WOULD HELP LIBERALS PICK UP ADDITIONAL ONE TO 3 SEATS. LIBERALS' TRADITIONAL SUPPORT FOR INCREASED SCOTTISH HOME RULE, TOGETHER WITH PARTY'S ENTRY IN GREATER NUMBER SCOTTISH CONSTITUENCIES, HE CLAIMED, SHOULD INCREASED ITS SHARE OF SCOTTISH VOTE AND, HE HOPED, CONFIDENTIAL

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REPRESENTATION AT WESTMINSTER. LIKE SNP, LIBERALS STAND TO GAIN FROM WIDESPREAD VOTER DISSATISFACTION WITH CURRENT STATE OF POLITICAL AFFAIRS.

5. CONCLUSIONS - SCOTTISH NATIONALISM, AS MANIFESTED BY RAPID GROWTH OF SNP, MAY PREVENT EITHER LABOR OR CONSERVATIVES FROM GAINING CLEAR MAJORITY IN NEXT PARLIAMENT. IN SHORT TERM SNP GAINS WOULD THREATEN UK'S POLITICAL STABILITY AND, OVER LONGER TERM, COULD ENDANGER ITS POLITICAL INTEGRITY. ACCORDINGLY, SNP CONSTITUTES A POTENTIAL DANGER TO US INTERESTS IN THE UK (SEE REFTEL B FOR DETAILS FOR SNP POLITICAL PROGRAM). IT IS EVIDENT THAT SNP IS MINING A RICH LODGE OF SCOTTISH RESENTMENT TOWARD THE ENGLISH AND GOVERNMENT FROM LONDON, BUT FULL EXTENT OF THIS PHENOMENON IS NOT CLEAR. RESULTS OF OCTOBER ELECTION, HOWEVER, SHOULD PROVIDE GREATER INSIGHT AS TO EXTENT OF SCOTTISH RESENTMENT AND EFFECTIVENESS OF LABOR AND TORY DEVOLUTION PROPOSALS.

IT DOES NOT APPEAR EITHER LABOR OR CONSERVATIVE DEVOLUTION PROPOSALS WILL STAUNCH HEMORRAGE OF SUPPORT FROM THESE PARTIES TO SNP, BUT THEY MAY REDUCE FLOW. IT ALSO SEEMS DOUBTFUL THAT LEADERS OF EITHER MAJOR PARTY WILL ENCOURAGE THEIR SUPPORTERS TO ENGAGE IN "STRATEGIC VOTING" (REFTEL A), BUT POSSIBLE EXTENT AND IMPACT OF VOLUNTARY STRATEGIC VOTING CANNOT BE ASSESSED. WHILE IMMEDIATE DANGER OF SNP CAN BE EXAGGERATED, SUBSTANTIAL SNP GAINS IN OCTOBER GENERAL ELECTION WOULD BE CAUSE FOR CONCERN. EMBASSY CONTINUES TO BELIEVE ELECTION RESULTS IN SCOTLAND WILL, AT VERY LEAST, GREATLY INFLUENCE NATURE OF NEXT BRITISH GOVERNMENT.  
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